

INFO	LOG-00	EEB-00	AMAD-00	INL-00	DOTE-00	PDI-00	DHSE-00
	EUR-00	FAAE-00	UTED-00	VCI-00	TEDE-00	IO-00	LAB-01
	CDC-00	VCIE-00	NEA-00	DCP-00	NSAE-00	ISN-00	GIWI-00
	ISNE-00	DOHS-00	IRM-00	NCTC-00	FMP-00	BBG-00	R-00
	ECA-00	IIP-00	SCRS-00	OCA-00	DRL-00	CARC-00	SAS-00
	FA-00	/001W					

-----5A9C83 271329Z /38

R 271311Z APR 09
 FM AMEMBASSY BERLIN
 TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3926
 INFO WHITE HOUSE WASHINGTON DC
 SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
 DIA WASHINGTON DC
 CIA WASHINGTON DC
 DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC
 FRG COLLECTIVE
 AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
 AMEMBASSY LONDON
 AMEMBASSY PARIS
 AMEMBASSY ROME
 USMISSION USNATO
 USMISSION USOSCE
 HQ USAFE RAMSTEIN AB GE
 HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE//J5 DIRECTORATE (MC)//
 CDRUSAREUR HEIDELBERG GE
 UDITDUSAREUR HEIDELBERG GE

UNCLAS BERLIN 000485

STATE FOR INR/R/MR, EUR/PAPD, EUR/PPA, EUR/CE, INR/EUC, INR/P,
 SECDEF FOR USDP/ISA/DSAA, DIA FOR DC-4A

VIENNA FOR CSBM, CSCE, PAA

"PERISHABLE INFORMATION -- DO NOT SERVICE"

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [GM](#) [US](#) [IZ](#) [PK](#) [SF](#) [IC](#)
 SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: SWINE FLU, IRAQ, OBAMA, TALIBAN, CIA,
 ARMENIA, SOUTH AFRICA, ICELAND

- [1. Lead Stories Summary](#)
- [2. Outbreak of Swine Flu in Mexico](#)
- [3. Secretary Clinton in Baghdad](#)
- [4. President Obama's First 100 Days](#)
- [5. Pakistan's Fight against the Taliban](#)
- [6. CIA/Rule of Law](#)
- [7. U.S.-Russian Disarmament Talks](#)
- [8. Turkish Reaction to Obama Remarks on Armenia](#)
- [9. South African Elections](#)
- [10. Iceland Elections](#)

- [1. Lead Stories Summary](#)

Editorials focused on the debate over the possibility of social unrest if the financial crisis continues, the outbreak of swine flu and the outcome of the elections in South Africa. The headlines in the national press focused on the swine flu, while Berlin's dailies opened with stories on the failed campaign to allow Berlin students to take religion courses instead of mandatory ethics classes. ZDF-TV's early evening newscast Heute and ARD-TV's early evening newscast Tagesschau opened with stories on swine flu.

- [2. Outbreak of Swine Flu in Mexico](#)

Frankfurter Allgemeine headlined: "First suspected cases of Swine Flu in Europe" and wrote: "the outbreak of the swine flu with a previously unknown virus has resulted in alarming statements from health authorities all over the world." The daily also carried a front-page commentary saying: "It is conspicuous that primarily young, healthy people have become sick, a parallel to the devastating 'Spanish flu' almost 100 years ago. But what this means for the pandemic potential of the Mexican flu will come to the fore only in the coming days."

"WHO is Afraid of Swine Flu Pandemic," Die Welt headlined, and reported: "Following the outbreak of the swine flu, more than 80 people have died and more than 1,300 people have been infected in Mexico. German health authorities are beginning to prepare for the scenario that the virus will arrive in Germany. A spokesman for the Robert-Koch Institute [which coordinates such efforts] said that 'the risk for Germany cannot yet be assessed.' The Foreign Ministry said that it will not yet issue a travel warning for Mexico." In a front-page editorial, the daily judged: "The WHO is using drastic words and is making it unmistakably clear that the new virus has the potential for a pandemic. However, this is in strange contrast to the measures that have been proposed thus far."

Handelsblatt editorialized: "It is ironic that a similar plague [such as SARS] among Mexican pigs is now causing new fears of a pandemic. At least it is now becoming visible how little mankind is able to do to defend itself with precautionary measures against the surprises of nature. Now it will be important to stop the spread of the virus with security measures especially at airports and to insist on the fact that countries where the virus broke out such as Mexico and the United States prevent a further spread of the disease. But there is not a single reason for causing panic like two years ago."

In a front-page editorial, die tageszeitung had this to say: "If we surf on Twitter for too long, we get the unavoidable desire to run to the next pharmacy to buy Tamiflu and breathing masks. One Twitter page that is run by the U.S. Center for Disease Control had more than one million hits on Saturday alone. Of course, it is good to see how quickly important information is spread these days, but the problem is the assessment. The media and individual people make mistakes, get panicky and infect others, and do this faster than the swine flu does. When looking back at the last candidate for a pandemic, SARS, then we must say that little remained, at least here. Of course, we must take precautionary measures, but panic is not the right antidote."

13. Secretary Clinton in Baghdad

Frankfurter Allgemeine wrote under the headline; "Clinton: We Continue to Stick to Withdrawal Plans," and added: "During her first visit to Baghdad since taking office, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton confirmed that, despite the increase in violence, the United States would stick to its withdrawal plans from Iraq. On Thursday and Friday, more than 150 people were killed during the worst attacks in this year." The paper added: "U.S. and Iraqi government officials said that one of the reasons for the most recent attacks is that the U.S. withdrawal and the transfer of responsibilities to Iraqi security forces has resulted in security gaps which are now being exploited by the Jihadists."

Sueddeutsche carried a report under the headline: "First Visit to a Country in Fear" and quoted an unnamed Iraqi citizen as having said: "To be frank we are scared, and many people have no confidence in the Iraqi security forces." The daily added: "This is a problem that Hillary Clinton is likely to have addressed in talks with U.S. Chief of Staff, Admiral Mike Mullen, who also traveled for a surprise visit to Iraq. There are also a few U.S. generals who are afraid that the troop withdrawal, which President Obama promised, will take place too fast and that this is one of the reasons for the [recent] violence."

Frankfurter Allgemeine commented: "For many months it looked like Iraq had calmed down a great deal. However, the recent attacks made clear that fanatics could dash the hopes for a permanent pacification of the country at any time.... One can assume that Sunni extremists are behind the attacks. However, this is not certain at all. Let's hope that the [Iraqi] government's recently successful attempts to reduce the violence will work again in the future because the sooner the date for the American withdrawal comes, the greater the risk for new violence."

Frankfurter Rundschau argued: "Following the most recent devastating attacks in Iraq, Hillary Clinton's words sound like holding out slogans. During her visit, she gave Iraq assurances that the United States would offer unrestricted support, but that the U.S. would also continue to stick to its withdrawal strategy. But what else could she have said? The most recent problems will bind U.S. forces

much more than the planners are thinking. This could jeopardize the U.S. strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan, where the U.S. wants to create calm with more soldiers. These are not good prospects for anyone."

14. President Obama's First 100 Days

Sunday's Frankfurter Allgemeine highlighted in a feature article on President Obama's first 100 days: "Although the President is popular, many people believe he is overreaching.... Obama started his presidency with messianic furor... Since Obama's inauguration, 600,000 jobs have been lost every month, the number of foreclosures is still rising, house prices continue to fall, the flow of loans is still bumpy, and bankruptcy is the key word in Detroit. Given all this, was it really necessary to start a dispute over the brutal interrogations of the CIA Less would have been more in the first 100 days."

Under the headline "The Riddle of Obama," Sueddeutsche commented on the President: "The day will come when this man will be human again - no longer a demigod - who has been enchanting the world as a verbal magician. He will no longer be the one who walks on water, but an ordinary politician.... This day of soberness will come, but nobody is talking of it this week as America's idol is celebrating his 100th day in office... The President has achieved more in the first three months than all his predecessors since Franklin D. Roosevelt.... Obama always succeeds in selling his policy as a necessity - a simple result of sheer reason, a logical step that is not based on any ideology. However, tedious pragmatism does not explain the hysteria. The key to the riddle is his personality, which meets the desire for visionary leadership."

Tagesspiegel editorialized: "The majority of the Americans would still make the same decision. Obama is their President. He is not coming to terms with Bush through the courts, but by showing through his policies and reforms that America can change."

15. Pakistan's Fight against the Taliban

A Sueddeutsche editorial highlighted that "Pakistan can't stop focusing on India, although the Taliban pose the greatest threat" and added: "The U.S. is having nightmares over the idea that the Pakistani nuclear arsenal could fall into the hands of radical Muslims, who are also leading the fight against the West in Afghanistan. The U.S. has little understanding for Pakistan's sentiments. Washington hopes in vain that the fight against terrorism will be a uniting bond. Pakistan has an archenemy and this is India, not the Taliban. The Pakistani perception is overblown. However, we have to deal with it.... U.S. Secretary Clinton now admitted a mistake made in the past. This was overdue. The U.S. cannot mediate between Pakistan and India at the moment. The resentment is too big."

Sunday's Die Welt commented: "Pakistan's future is at stake. This is not just important for Pakistan, but also for whole international community because the country possesses nuclear weapons.... As the Taliban are leaving their refuge of the Swat Valley and moving towards Islamabad, alarm bells are ringing, particularly in Washington.... President Obama, who is willing to hold talks, will not make compromises when it comes to national security. The Pakistani government of Zardari is under extreme international and particularly American pressure. It must end its hesitating and ambiguous policies.... It must realize that the Taliban pose a threat to a democratically organized civilian society. A Talibanization of Pakistan would have a serious impact on the war in Afghanistan, which the West must win if it wants to prevent the return of the breeding ground of terrorism that led to September 11."

Sunday's Frankfurter Allgemeine remarked: "Regardless of whether the peace agreement was a sign of weakness or simply a failed attempt to drive a wedge between the Islamist groups in the country, Islamabad does not seem to have a strategy for fighting the extremists in its own country. The capture of Islamabad is not imminent... but the situation is a cause for concern. The consequences of the mixture of weak state structures, social misery and Islamic radicalization in the region can be studied in the neighboring Afghanistan."

16. CIA/Rule of Law

Under the headline "Torture must be punished," Die Welt commented: "President Obama's amnesty for CIA officials who applied brutal interrogation methods might be understandable. However, it is not appropriate. The mistreatment, torture and harassment that were part of the interrogation of detainees in Guantanamo violate American and international laws. The majority of inmates were terrorists. The interrogations were about protecting America's and the world's security.... However, torture must not be the tool to gather information. This had never been the case in the U.S. until September 11, 2001 changed the country. One can understand the amnesty, but it is not right."

17. U.S.-Russia Disarmament Talks

According to Frankfurter Allgemeine, "the chances for a quick success are nowhere as great as in the U.S.-Russian talks about a reduction of strategic nuclear weapons. The START treaty expires at the end of this year. Even before the change of government in Washington, both governments agreed that there should be a follow-on agreement with lower ceilings for nuclear warheads and carrier systems. That is why it is no surprise that, after the beginning of the talks in Rome, people see a promising beginning. Each disarmament step begins with START, but time will tell whether Russia will turn into a reliable partner at eye level."

18. Turkish Reaction to Obama Remarks on Armenia

Frankfurter Allgemeine opined: "Even though President Obama did not explicitly use the term 'genocide' in his statement, leading Turkish politicians expressed their dissatisfaction with his view on the 'Armenian atrocities.' Turkey insists on the establishment of a 'commission of historians' and this view is based on the opinion that Turkey's version is likely to be reconfirmed. But what would happen if this did not come true? This controversy cannot be kept away from politics. But probably, the government in Ankara would be more accessible if Armenia did not always question the Kars-G|mr border treaty from 1912. Turkey is also afraid of compensations payments. The issue is not about 'honor' alone."

According to an editorial in Die Tageszeitung under the headline: "Not a Big Disaster," at first glance, "Barack Obama was unable to reconcile all sides involved. The only ones whose irritation is now well-founded, however, are the Azeris, because the Turkish government, in consent with Barack Obama, is of the opinion that only a new real rapprochement between Turkey and Armenia can improve the poisoned atmosphere between both sides. The opening of borders and the free exchange of people and goods would be an important step for this. Thus far, no U.S. president wanted to insult Turkey. But it was Obama, who, a few weeks ago, addressed the issue of coming to terms with the past. Publisher Hrant Dink, who was killed in Istanbul three years ago, once said: 'I consider the conscience of my Turkish friend to be more important than the things the powers-that-be in the world have to say.' And at the beginning of the year, 30,000 Turks signed a declaration in which they apologize for the 'Great Disaster from 1915 to their Armenian neighbors. Thus President Obama knows what he is talking about.'"

19. South African Elections

In a front-page editorial, Frankfurter Allgemeine had this to say: "The ANC has now lost four percent in the elections, and thus its two-thirds majority. Basically, the real winner of this election is the Democratic Alliance (DA) with Capetonian Mayor Hellen Zille at the helm. These elections signal a change, but more than the DA, Cope is responsible for it. It achieved two goals at the same time: it was able to convey in a credible way that it is not tantamount to treason not to vote for the ANC, and to establish itself as a reservoir for the black and white middle class. The ANC will now have to adjust to the view that it will be unable to increase its share beyond 66 percent. The party will rather be threatened with a massive loss of votes if it is again unable to create the promised jobs and inexpensive housing. After a long lasting economic boom, the country is now in a recession, and more than 300,000 jobs will be cut in the mining and automobile sectors. It will be the Zuma government's prime task to reduce this social unrest until the next elections. However, it is unclear how to do this in view of an

inefficient educational system, economic decline, and an unemployment rate of almost 40 percent."

Regional daily Schwaebische Zeitung of Leutkirch argued: "Jacob Zuma has often been characterized as a bogeyman, as unpredictable and as an enemy to the economy. But this is exaggerated. Of course, Zuma is a populist. He played the card of left-wing populism in the campaign in order to be elected. Trade unionists and the party's left wing have paved his way to the presidency. They will now demand something in return. In view of the high expectations, it will be impossible for Zuma to avoid disappointments."

10. Iceland Elections

"Iceland's Left-Wing Achieves Absolute Majority," is the headline in Frankfurter Allgemeine which noted: "In the early Icelandic elections, in the voters have reacted to the financial debacle with a clear slide to the left... However, the result was less obvious than previous opinion polls allowed us to assume. Iceland's new Prime Minister Sigurdardsttir called the outcome a 'day of reckoning with Neo-liberalism.'"

Sueddeutsche Zeitung editorialized: "Following these elections, the outcome of the referendum on Iceland's accession to the EU is totally open. Prime Minister Sigurdardsttir will have difficulty convincing her people of the advantages of the EU, for Europeans and Icelanders have totally differing expectations of an accession. The Icelanders like the EU because of the strong euro, but in other areas, they do not want to have any EU interference such as in fishery policies. If the EU, however, were able to convince the Icelanders of these advantages, this would have a symbolic effect, and Brussels would be able to strengthen its influence in a strategically and economically important region."

In an editorial, Frankfurter Rundschau noted: "The early elections in Iceland have resulted in the expected day of reckoning with the ones who were politically responsible for the financial chaos. Now the island is knocking at the EU's doors. But making this happen will be difficult because only the Social Democrats clearly advocated Iceland's accession to the EU."

Die tageszeitung opined: "Now the Icelanders have achieved all the things for which they took to the streets over the past few weeks. The old government stepped down, the heads of the Central Bank were fired, and early elections took place over the weekend. In any case, the high voter turnout signals that the Icelanders have not lost their confidence in the political system. And the election result shows that they think they have found the ones to blame for the misery, and a majority voted for a social democratic/green coalition."

KOENIG